

THEORIES OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS:

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

A01

Rewards, costs, profits

Thibault and Kelley (1959) - behaviour reflects economic assumptions of exchange. Minimise losses, maximise gains. Judge satisfaction using rewards minus costs, as visible, they're subjective and can vary significantly, might be less valuable sometimes. Rewards=companionship, sex, emotional support, not always 'bed of roses'. Involve negative unpleasant emotions well as pleasurable ones. Economic language—**Blau (1964)**- relationships can be expensive, costs=time, energy, compromise, relationship include another type=opportunity. Investment time and energy current relationship means using resources can't use elsewhere.

Comparison level (CL)

Measure profit of relationship: amount of reward believe you should get, develops from experience of other relationships. Feed expectations into current one. Influenced by social norms, to be reasonable level of reward. Often reflected-media, book, film, TV. Over time more experience of social norms, CL changes as acquire more data to set it. Worth pursuing if CL high. Link with self-esteem. Low self-esteem=low CL, satisfied with small profit. Higher self-esteem=worth more.

Comparison level for alternatives (CLalt)

Second measure of profit. Wider context current relationship. Do we believe we gain greater rewards and fewer costs from another relationship? 'could I do better?' SET predicts stay as long as more rewarding than alternatives. Duck (1994) - CLalt adopt will depend on state of current relationship. 'plenty more fish in the sea'. Costs outweigh rewards, alternatives more attractive. Satisfied means may not even notice alternatives.

Stages of relationship development

4 stages relationship develop: **1. sampling stage:** explore rewards and costs, experimenting with them. **2. bargaining stage:** marks beginning of relationship, partners exchange various rewards and costs, negotiating and identifying most profitable. **3. commitment stage:** time goes on, source costs and rewards more predictable, relationship more stable, rewards increase, costs lessen. **4. institutionalisation stage:** partners settled norms of relationship established.

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INAPPROPRIATE ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING SET

Researchers don't accept metaphor of economic. Clark and Mills (2011)- argues doesn't distinguish between two types. Exchange=involve social exchange as predicted, but communal=giving and receiving rewards without keeping score. Claims partners return rewards for rewards, costs for costs, activities monitored. Felt it at start-question commitment wanted. Based faulty assumptions, cannot account for majority.

DIRECTION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

Dissatisfaction=costs outweigh rewards, alternatives more attractive. Argyle (1987)-don't measure costs/rewards, don't constantly consider attractiveness of alternatives. Not until dissatisfied. Research supports dissatisfaction comes first=Miller (1997)-rated self highly committed, spent less looking images attractive people. Less time spent looking=good predictor relationship still 2 months later. Committed ignore even most attractive alternatives. SET can't account direction of causation.

SET IGNORES EQUITY

Concern=comparison levels, ratio of rewards/costs. Focus ignores equity. As why development=equity theory. Research support for role of equity in relationships, view more important just balance rewards/costs. Neglect SET limited explanation cannot account for significant proportion research findings on relationships.

MEASURING SET CONCEPTS

Deals with things difficult to quantify. Rewards/costs defined superficially order to measure. Psychologists rewards/costs difficult to define, when vary from one person to another. CL=problematic, unclear values of CL and CLalt, must be before dissatisfaction threatens relationship. How attractive do alternatives need to be? Can't measure rewards/costs in reliable way-limits SET.

ARTIFICIAL RESEARCH

Majority studies artificial tasks-e.g. 2 strangers work together game-playing scenario rewards/costs distributed. 2 partners know nothing about each other, so called relationship depends on task. Other research more realistic less supportive-snapshot studies cannot account for properties emerged from relationship over time-trust. Research relationships aren't realistic, limitation weakens as research not reliable.

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Levels of prosocial relationships

McCutcheon et al (2002)-celebrity attitude scale, used large-scale survey-Maltby et al (2006)-three levels of parasocial relationships, each describing attitudes and behaviours linked to extreme forms of celebrity worship:

-Entertainment-social: least intense level, celebrities viewed sources of entertainment, fuel social interactions. Giles (2002)-parasocial relationships were rewarding source of gossip in an office. **-Intense-personal:** intermediate level, reflects greater personal involvement parasocial relationship with celeb. May consider celeb a soul mate. **-Borderline pathological:** strongest level, uncontrollable fantasies, extreme behaviours, e.g. spend lot of money on their merch. Or doing something illegal because celeb said to.

The absorption-addiction model

McCutcheon (2002)-tendency form parasocial relationship due to deficiencies in own life. Allows 'escape from reality', find fulfilment can't achieve in actual relationship. Liked to levels above. Has two components: **1. absorption:** seek fulfilment celebrity worship motivates individual focus their attention far as possible celebrity, become pre-occupied existence and identity with them. **2. addiction:** need to sustain commitment to relationship feeling stronger closer involvement with celebrity. Lead to extreme behaviours and delusional thinking. E.g. stalking as think they want to reciprocate but someone, e.g. manager stopping it.

The attachment theory explanation

Various psychologists suggested tendency to form parasocial relationships in adolescence/adulthood as attachment difficulties in early childhood. Bowlby's attachment theory suggest difficulties may lead to emotional troubles later in life. Ainsworth (1979)-two attachment types associated unhealthy emotional development: **insecure-avoidant, insecure-resistant.** Insecure-resistant=parasocial as adults, need unfulfilled needs met, but in relationship not accompanied by threat of rejection, break-up, disappointment real life relationships bring. Insecure-avoidant=avoid pain and rejection or relationships altogether, whether social or prosocial.

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SUPPORT FOR THE ABSORPTION-ADDICTION MODEL

Maltby et al (2005)-link celebrity worship and body image, males/females aged 14 to 16. interest=females intense-personal parasocial relationship with female celeb body shape admired. Found adolescents had poor body image=link precursor development of eating disorders. Maltby et al (2003)-entertainment-social category with extraverted personality traits, intense-personal=neurotic, borderline-pathological=psychotic. Studies support-confirm prediction correlation between level of worship poor psychological functioning.

PROBLEMS WITH ATTACHMENT THEORY

McCutcheon et al (2006)-attachment types and celebrity related attitudes-229 pps. Found-pps insecure attachment-no more likely form parasocial with celebs than pps with secure. Findings fail to support central prediction of attachment theory, serious doubt over validity.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Two major issues: first=self-reports-can cause bias, e.g. pps may respond quite personal items in way of enhancing social status=social desirability bias. Second=Correlational analysis. Strong found between celeb worship and body image. Conclusion intense-personal parasocial relationship causes young women to have poor body image is unwarranted. Could be girls with poor body image drawn to celeb worship. Issue of cause and effect could be addressed by longitudinal study-currently lacked. As model based on such studies, questions over validity as explanation.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ABSORPTION-ADDICTION MODEL

Better description of parasocial relationships than explanation. E.g. model capable of describing characteristics people most absorbed by and addicted to celebrity. Unlike, attachment theory, doesn't explain how characteristics develop. Undermines validity as doesn't give valid record, just description, no evidence of how it occurs.

NOTES